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AUTHOR Thomas, Hollie B.
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ABSTRACT

The cardinal objective of Project REDY was the development of a vocationally oriented, family centered educational program in a depressed rural area. However, before a workable educational program could be developed, the status quo of severely disadvantaged rural families had to be ascertained. In order to do this, the "Minnesota Survey of Opinion" was given to a random sample of 31 heads of household identified as being socially or economically disadvantaged and to 82 heads of households representing a cross-section of the population in a southern Illinois county. Scores were obtained on general adjustment (degree to which a person has adjusted to his environment) and total morale (assessment including attitudes toward personal inferiority, family, law, conservatism, and education). A general adjustment score was arrived at by comparing the negative and positive responses of the other 2 variables. Results indicated that the severely disadvantaged families had a significantly lower morale and poorer general adjustment than did the sample of the total population of families in the same geographic area. (LS)

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Development of Human Resources Through A Vocationally Oriented Educational Program For Disadvantaged Families in Depressed Rural Areas

MORALE OF FAMILIES IN AN ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED RURAL AREA

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HOLLIE B. THOMAS

April 1970

The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated, do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

Vocational and Technical Education Department
College of Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Urbana, Illinois

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PREFACE

This project, commonly referred to as Project REDY (Rural Education: Disadvantaged Youth), resulted in the development of a vocationally oriented, family-centered educational program that can be used by educators to help severely disadvantaged families overcome the social and psychological pressures which inhibit their advancement in the affluent American society. The focus of the research is on making economically depressed rural areas a better place in which to live by developing the human resources within the area. This is the sixth in a series of preliminary reports published to disseminate the findings of Project REDY.

Lloyd J. Phipps, Project Director
and Principal Investigator
Hollie B. Thomas, Principal Investigator
David L. Williams, Principal Investigator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project REDY staff wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the many residents of rural areas who participated in the study. Without their interest and cooperation the project could not have been a success. Special recognition goes to the administrators of schools and other public agencies in the rural communities for their support, encouragement and cooperation during the project.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION IS GIVEN TO DR. GERALD R. FULLER WHO ASSISTED IN INITIATING AND PLANNING THE PROJECT AND WHO SERVED AS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PROJECT REDY FOR THREE YEARS.

A number of other individuals have been closely identified with the project. Among them are Don Brockett, Paul Brown, H. C. Hendren, Sam Jones, Steve Pollack, Keith Romack, Jack Shetler, Clifford Sichta, and Robert Wheeler. These men served as consultants and local coordinators for the project. Sincere thanks is extended to Mrs. Julia D. Flewelling for her tireless efforts in providing typing and clerical assistance.

Many research units, offices, and individual staff members at the University of Illinois have provided special services and advice essential to the success of the project. The Center on Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE) made easier many of the problems faced by the project staff through the expert advice and services they provided. The timely assistance from colleagues in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education was appreciated.

A host of people serving as assistants, clerical workers, key-punch operators or computer programmers have faithfully assisted in one or more phases of Project REDY. The contribution of the following individuals insured the success of the project:

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INTRODUCTION

Disadvantaged citizens, whether they be socially, economically, or culturally deprived, have been the focus of much concern in the past decade. Included here are some minority groups which are making their disapproval of their own situation known overtly; other groups are quietly removing themselves from the mainstream of society and forming subcultures unique unto themselves as evidenced in the recent popularity of the communes. Those groups making their plight known are the ones getting the most attention from both politicians and individuals, thus once again proving the adage that "the wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the most greast." Thus, while some progress is being made in improving the lot of certain groups, others are drifting still further from the mainstream of societal norms.

The rural poor can be defined as a group in that silent minority. Little is said today about people living in substandard conditions in the rural areas: the antithesis of concern for cities. Many citizens will deny that such groups exist in their community; however, investigation of census data indicates the opposite.

Often severely economically disadvantaged families from rural areas have sought to raise their standard of living by moving to a large urban center where wages are much higher than in the rural areas. However, they soon discover that the rural way of life was much less expensive. Thus, instead of raising their standard of living, they find they remain static or even fall further. In addition, they generally are less satisfied because of the turmoil that is so much a part of the inner city. These chain reactions of rural poor moving to the cities and becoming ever more unhappy as urban poor prompted the researchers to investigate the degree to which individuals identified as being severely socially and economically disadvantaged differed from the total population of people within the same community with regard to morale and general adjustment. This was designed to provide data necessary to develop a family-centered vocationally oriented educational program for disadvantaged families in rural areas. It was anticipated that knowledge of the morale and general adjustment of rural disadvantaged families would play a key role in the development of such a program.

Purpose of the research

Before a workable educational program could be developed for the economically disadvantaged rural families, the status quo of these people had to be determined. The present phase of Project REDY was designed to ascertain the level of morale and general adjustment of severely disadvantaged rural families as compared to the total population of families living in the same area.

It was anticipated that in learning more about the characteristics of economically disadvantaged rural families, the researchers would be able to develop a more comprehensive educational program which, when implemented, would improve such factors as morale and adjustment; further, it would facilitate advancements in bringing these families back into the mainstream of the community activities and educational opportunities.

Due to rapid technological advances, the number of unskilled jobs available has decreased and, consequently, the level of skill needed to obtain a well-paying job has increased. Thus, education and training is a necessity if a man is to support his family above the poverty level. Economical and social disadvantages accrue whenever the head of the household withdraws from the educational and occupational mainstream and settles for a subsistence level of income.

This study was designed to determine the effects of economic disadvantages on a person's morale and general adjustment so as to provide baseline data on these factors in determining the content of the educational program which was to be developed and used in the later phases of Project REDY.

Instrumentation

The short form of the Minnesota Survey of Opinion (MSO) was selected to assess the overall morale and general adjustment of the samples selected. Rundquist and Sletto (32) developed this Likert-type scale instrument during the depression years and studied the effects of the depression on family life and the adjustment of children; thus, the applicability of the instrument in the study of depressed rural areas is apparent. It has been observed by the researchers that economically depressed rural families of today live in similar conditions as did most rural families during the depression.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by Rundquist and Sletto employing the Spearman-Brown formula which yielded correlation coefficients of .79 to .88. Miller (25) reported that split-half reliability coefficients for the General Adjustment scale of the MSO range from .69 to .84 while the test-retest coefficients of stability for a 60-day period were .79 and .67 respectively for college men and women.

The MSO was validated by relating it to criterion variables measuring morale and relating these to scores on six other scales in the long form of the MSO, namely, the law, conservatism, inferiority, and educational scales (32).

Hall (12) correlated a score obtained from an instrument he had developed to measure morale with the MSO using data from 100 male university students. The correlation coefficient between the total score for the MSO and Hall's morale scale was .65.

Miller, (26) using the MSO, found that both male and female college graduates employed in the lower occupational ranks exhibited low morale and further, that male individuals with low incomes tended to have low morale. Miller also found that during the depression younger men had lower morale than older men, but also noted that generally the younger men had not had an opportunity for prior advancement. Other factors found to be positively related to the level of morale included stability of employment, hours worked per week, financial plans for old age, and satisfaction with job held.

Research population

A rural, southern Illinois county identified from census data as being economically depressed was the geographic area selected for this phase of Project REDY. The total population of families in the county served as the population from which a random sample of families was drawn. A total of 2,073 families were identified as living in the study area, of which 238 were identified as being severely disadvantaged, both socially and economically. Severely socially and economically disadvantaged families were considered to be those families who had an average annual income of less than $3,000 or were considered to be socially or economically disadvantaged, due to family size or other economic factors, by officials of state and county agencies. Among those agencies contacted to identify disadvantaged families were: (1) schools,

(2) State Employment Service, (3) Cooperative Extension Service, (4) welfare agencies, (5) churches, (6) law enforcement agencies, and (7) Office of Economic Opportunity. Lists of family names derived from these sources were combined and evaluated by individuals in the community agencies to obtain consensus of the deprived socioeconomic condition of the families listed.

The sample

Sampling was performed in two steps. First, the total population was randomly sampled to obtain a representative sample of the total population of families in the county and second, a random sample of the families identified as being severely disadvantaged was drawn.

Data collection procedures

Trained interviewers contacted the head of each family in the selected samples. During the interviews conducted in the spring of 1966 at the residence of each family, the MSO was administered to the head of the household of each family interviewed. The directions given to the family member were worded so as to obtain responses representative of the general feeling of the adult family members regarding their morale and general adjustment.

Morale and general adjustment data were collected for an 82 family sample representing the total population of 2,073 families identified as being residents of a rural southern Illinois county, the criterion for inclusion in the population. Similar data were also collected for 31 severely disadvantaged families selected at random from the population of 238 families identified as being severely disadvantaged both socially and economically using the same geographic criterion.

Statistical analysis

Families included in this study were selected by random procedures from two strata. These strata were: (1) 2,073 families identified as residents of the selected county, and (2) 238 families identified as being severely disadvantaged socially and economically. Thus, the one-way analysis of variance (35) employed to analyze the data, included two levels: a total population sample, a sample of all families of all income levels, and a sample of severely socially and economically disadvantaged families. An F level of .05 or above was accepted as being significant.

Since the random samples represented various strata of the total population with regard to income, departures from homogeneity of variance were observed. Where departures from homogeneity were great, Bartlett's test for homogeneity of variance (35) was employed. Winer noted that, "The experimenter need be concerned about only relatively large departures from the hypothesis of equal population variances because F tests are robust with respect to departure from homogeneity of variance."

Comparisons were made to determine if there were significant differences between the total population sample and the severely disadvantaged families on the factors of general adjustment and total morale as measured by the MSO.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of morale

In reviewing the literature on morale, wide variation was found in the definition of the concept. Viteles (34) defined morale as an attitude of satisfaction to continue and willingness to strive for the goals of the group. Blum (4) and Dunlap (8) viewed morale as a function of the extent to which individuals feel accepted by and as belonging to a group of employees through adherence to common goals and confidence in the desirability of the goals.

Bateson and Mead (3) defined morale as the degree to which the attitudes of the individual members of a group are expressed in appropriate action. To reconcile the various definitions of morale, the National Research Council on Psychological Factors in Morale (33) formulated three major definitions:

1. The term "morale" refers to a condition of physical and emotional well being in an individual that makes it possible for him to work and live hopefully and effectively, feeling that he shares the basic purposes of the groups to which he is a member, and makes it possible for him to perform his tasks.

2. "Morale" refers to the condition of a group where there are clear and fixed group goals that are felt to be important and integrated with the individual goals; where there is confidence in the attainment of these goals and, subordinately, confidence in the means of attaining them, in the leader, associations, and finally oneself; where group actions are integrated and cooperative; and where aggression and hostility are expressed against forces frustrating a group rather than individuals within a group.

3. Given a certain task to be accomplished by the group, "morale" pertains to all factors in the individual's life that bring about a hopeful and energetic participation on his part so that his efforts enhance the effectiveness of the group in accomplishing the task at hand.

Most of the foregoing definitions of morale pertain to morale in a group work situation. In this study an attempt was made to apply the concept beyond the realm of the world of work to include other areas that influence the individual. In introducing the concept of "life space," Kurt Lewin (21) emphasized that it is the totality of facts that determine the behavior of a given individual at a given time. This includes the person himself, everything that influences his behavior, and the subjective reality that influences him at a given time.

When the individual decides or acts, he does so as an organic whole to meet his various needs which may be economic, social, intellectual, or emotional in nature. A definition of morale that seems to fit this extended concept is the one formulated by Rundquist and Sletto (32) and adopted by Miller (26). As defined by these researchers, "Morale is the degree to which the individual feels competent to cope with the future and to achieve his desired goals."

Measurement of morale

Most empirical workers consider morale as a measurable trait. Ash (1) treats morale as some underlying entity which can be measured by such indices

as responses to a questionnaire or through observation of work behavior. While regarding morale as a hypothetical construct, Blum (4) considers it also as a measurable entity.

Singer (33) indicated that the principal methods often used in measuring morale are the questionnaire and the interview. There had been some attempts to measure morale empirically. Hall (12) successfully applied the technique developed by Likert (22) to the measurement of morale. Hull and Kolstad (16) reported a study in which the morale of 43,962 employees in 141 separate employee populations was measured. Giese and Ruter (9) made an objective analysis of morale and development some indices of job morale, such as productive efficiency and labor turnover. Most of these studies pertain to the measurement of morale in industry.

Rundquist and Sletto (32) developed an instrument which became known as the Minnesota Survey of Opinion, the purpose of which was to measure a generalized form of morale. The instrument was first administered by Rundquist and Sletto to 2,882 subjects composed of college and high school students, adults enrolled in night classes, and men receiving public aid. It had a split-half reliability coefficient of .80 and a correlation of .65 with the morale scale developed by Hall (12). The Minnesota Survey of Opinion was also used by Miller (27) in his study of the morale of 951 college-trained adults, in which he tested 50 factors operating in the economic life of high- and low-morale persons for possible association with morale.

Factors related to morale

A number of factors have been cited by some authors and researchers to be related to morale. Coch and French (7) found that the morale of employees can be improved and desired changes can be facilitated if the group is provided the opportunity to participate in planning for desired changes.

Experiences involving success or failure have also been found to influence the morale of people. Cartwright and Zander (6) indicated that repeated failure in achieving goals may lead to frustration and lowering of morale. This was demonstrated empirically by Bachman (2) in his study of 102 psychology students dealing with the manipulation of perceived success or failure. Success led to an increase in satisfaction and in perceived ability, while failure led to dissatisfaction and a decrease in perceived ability which is indicative of the lowering of morale.

Herzberg, et al. (14) reviewed a number of studies dealing with the factors related to job morale. Some of their findings were:

1. Seventeen of 23 studies reviewed found significant association between job morale and age. The relationship was curvilinear indicating high morale at an early age with an all-time low between 25 and 30 years and a steady climb at an advancing age.

2. Of 17 studies relating length of service to job morale, 8 found high morale to be associated significantly with longer length of service, 7 found no association, while 2 studies reported longer length of service to be associated with lower job morale.

3. Of 13 studies correlating educational attainment and morale, 5 found no significant association, 3 revealed an increase in morale with increase in education, and 5 showed a decrease in morale with more education.

4. Four out of six studies relating IQ to job morale found no significant association between the two variables, one study found a positive relationship, and another a negative relationship.

5. Of ten studies correlating psychological maladjustment and morale, six reported lower morale with greater psychological maladjustment, two reported higher morale with greater maladjustment, while two other studies found no significant association between morale and psychological maladjustment.

6. Of 12 studies relating marital status to morale, 3 revealed higher morale for married couples, 1 study found lower morale with marriage, while 8 found no significant relationship between the marital status and morale.

7. Of 26 studies relating job morale to productivity, 14 reported positive correlation, 3 showed negative correlation, and 9 reported no relationship.

Kahn and Katz (17) stressed the close relationship between productivity and morale. The findings of their study suggested that "the full motivation of workers in a complex organizational system can be tapped only when some system of functional representative assures them of an element of control in the larger organization as well as in the primary group."

Singer (33) indicated that job morale is a result of both environmental situation and personality. The adjustment of the individual is influenced by the type of environment in which he functions both physically and psychologically.

Marrow (23) stated that time perspective is a determinant of morale. He indicated that the level of morale is dependent to a large extent upon the individual's attitude toward the future, past, and present. Morale is also dependent upon the value of the goal and the possibility of reaching it. If the individual is deprived of the opportunity to achieve the goals which he considers valuable for him or for his family, he may develop negative attitudes toward himself and society.

In his study of the morale of 951 college-trained adults, Miller (26) found the following conditions to be associated with low morale: (1) financial insecurity, (2) lack of social approval of job, (3) lack of opportunity for occupational advancement, and (4) feeling that one does not get satisfying rewards from labor exerted.

Miller found that financial security is the most important factor in the morale of college-trained adults. High and regular income and stability of employment were often associated with higher morale in men, and financial plans for old age were associated with the morale of both men and women.

The importance of the social environment in the development of morale has also been cited by Miller (27). As social conditions range from what society considers desirable to undesirable, there is a tendency for morale to range from high to low. The influence of the social environment on morale was first proposed by Reinhardt (31) who postulated that "the morale of any individual is

partly explained by the nature of the social situation...and by how the individual feels that some purpose or value of his own is affected by the situation." This postulate was tested and verified by Miller (27).

Morale and anomie

Low morale is often considered one of the symptoms of "anomie," a condition in which the individual disassociates himself from the norms, aspirations and goals of society. Anomie is usually accompanied by feelings of futility and alienation. It is often expressed in unconcern for one's future, resistance to change, and in aggression against self in extreme cases (11). For instance, Lander (19) found a close relationship between anomie and delinquency.

Langer and Michael (20), in their monumental study of "Midtown" Manhattan, found that anomie is usually prevalent among individuals with low socioeconomic status. A greater proportion of lower class than higher class individuals agreed with "anomie" statements, suggesting "feelings of futility, alienation from group and society, depression, resignation, social isolation, and concomitant distrust of others."

A number of studies on anomie, such as those conducted by Mizruchi (28), Meir and Bell (24), and Pearlin (29), found that one cause of anomie is the wide discrepancy between aspirations and achievement and the perception of limited opportunities for the achievement of goals. Kornhauser (18) and Mizruchi (28) found anomie to be more common among those with low socioeconomic status and limited education. Lower class anomie is usually due to limited occupational advancement and inadequate social integration into the community.

Similarly, Rosenthal (30) found that lack of access among lower class individuals to sources of prestige, such as wealth, education, and family reputation motivated nonconformity. Bordua (5) also found low educational attainment and overcorwding as contributory factors to anomie.

In his classic book, The Other America, Harrington (13) stated that poverty is usually accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, negativism, and hostility. Regarding the people in poverty, he wrote:

> The other Americans, the poor, feel differently than the rest of the nation. They tend to be hopeless and passive, yet prone to bursts of violence; they are lonely and isolated, often rigid and hostile. To be poor is not simply to be deprived of material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal futile universe, an America within America with a twisted spirit.

Anomie is often associated with psychological disorders. Research indicates that the economically disadvantaged are more prone to psychological maladjustment than those in the upper socioeconomic strata. For instance, Hollingshead and Redlick (15) found that the rate of mental illness was much higher among the lower class than the middle class or upper class of society.

RESULTS

The results will be presented in two main sections corresponding to the two scores derived from the MSO. These two scores were computed from the items on the MSO administered to the head of the household of each of the 113 families

in the samples. These scores were General Adjustment, representing the degree to which a person has adjusted to his environment, and Total Morale, representing an overall assessment of morale including attitudes toward personal inferiority, family, law, conservatism, and education. The instrument was designed so that some items required a positive response while others required a negative response in order to show a favorable attitude toward the individual's and the family's environment. Since a low score was assigned to a favorable response, a low score represents a favorable attitude toward the environment or a good adjustment in the case of the General Adjustment score.

General adjustment

The means for the general adjustment variable for the severely disadvantaged sample and the total population sample were significantly different at the .01 level as shown in Table I. The General Adjustment mean score of the severely disadvantaged group was significantly higher (lower morale) than the group representing the total research population as presented in Table II. The departure from homogeneity of variance was not large enough to indicate the need for employing the Bartlett test of homogeneity.

Total morale

The means for the total morale variable for the severely disadvantaged sample and the total population sample were significant difference at the .01 level as presented in Table III. Inspection of the sample means included in Table IV indicated that the disadvantaged group had a mean Total Morale score approximately one standard deviation lower than the mean Total Morale score for the total population sample.

Although there was considerable departure from homogeneity of variance when the squared standard deviations were considered, the difference was not great enough to indicate that the Bartlett test should have been employed. Since the disadvantaged group was smaller in number, it could be assumed that the variance would be greater.

Table 1.--Comparison of Severely Disadvantaged Families with a Total Population Sample of Families Based on MSO General Adjustment Scores

Source	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F ratio
Between	1	666.930	11.096**
Within	111	60.104	
Total	112		

**Significant at the .01 level.

Table 2.--Means and Standard Deviations of MSO General Adjustment Scores for Severely Disadvantaged Families and a Sample of Families from the Total Population

Group	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Disadvantaged	31	43.774	8.678
Cross-section	82	38.329	7.380

Table 3.--Comparison of Severely Disadvantaged Families with a Total Population Sample of Families Based on MSO Total Morale Scores

Source	Degrees of freedom	Mean Scores	F ratio
Between	1	2112.250	23.669**
Within	111	89.240	
Total	112		

**Significant at the .01 level.

Table 4.--Means and Standard Deviations of MSO Total Morale Scores for Severely Disadvantaged Families and a Sample of Families from the Total Population

Group	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Disadvantaged	31	43.774	8.678
Cross-section	82	38.329	7.380

The hypotheses that the mean level of morale and general adjustment of severely disadvantaged rural families do not differ from a sample of the total population in the same community was not tenable. Psychological deprivation, as manifested by a lower morale and poorer general adjustment, was evident in the severely disadvantaged families. Thus, severely disadvantaged families were more inclined to agree with items on the Minnesota Survey of Opinion that indicate feelings of hopelessness, alienation, and frustration.

As compared to the norm group representative of the total population, the families identified as being severely disadvantaged can be characterized as being more rigid and suspicious of people who try to assist them. Possessing a fatalistic outlook on life, they do not plan ahead. Hence, the severely disadvantaged families tend to live from hand to mouth and establish few, if any, goals for the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if disadvantaged rural families differed significantly from a sample representing the total population of families in the same geographic area on factors of general adjustment and total morale. The Minnesota Survey of Opinion (MSO) was employed to measure the variables.

The researchers hypothesized that the level of morale and general adjustment of the severely disadvantaged families would be poorer than the total population sample. This hypothesis was founded on the proposition that if the level of morale and general adjustment were equal to or higher than the total population, the severely disadvantaged families would be taking appropriate action to alleviate their disadvantaged situation.

A random sample was drawn from 238 families from the total population of 2,073 families living in a southern Illinois county identified as being socially or economically disadvantaged on the basis of income or being considered to be economically or socially disadvantaged by one or more of the state or community agencies. A second sample, designated as the total population sample, was drawn randomly from the total population of families in the same geographic area.

These two samples served as the levels in the one way analysis of variance employed for analysis of the data.

The data were collected by trained interviewers during on-site interviews. Directions given to the heads of the household by the interviewers were such that responses were representative of the general feeling of the adult family members.

Morale variables

The Minnesota Survey of Opinion (MSO) was employed to obtain two morale scores from each of the families in the samples: general adjustment and total morale. It was determined that the severely disadvantaged group was significantly lower in general adjustment, as measured by the MSO. These results bore out the expectations of the researchers since it was anticipated that living in an environment lacking proper food, clothing, transportation, health care, and shelter would lead to a degeneration of an individual's feeling of worth. Hence, this is an area on which an educational program, designed to upgrade the disadvantaged persons' expectations and outlook, must focus a great deal of emphasis. Before a family will remove themselves from their disadvantaged situation and become better adjusted to the society around them, they must become aware of the possibility and gain confidence that they can improve their social and economic situation. The anomie, a condition in which a person disassociates himself from societal norms, is emphasized by the disadvantaged families' rationalization that "everyone is against them" and that "nothing will turn out right no matter how hard you try" is a major hurdle an educational program designed to motivate economically disadvantaged people must overcome if it is to succeed.

It was determined that the disadvantaged sample had a significantly poorer total morale score than the sample representing all levels of income. Since the total morale score included items that related to personal inferiority, law, conservatism, and education, it was anticipated the disadvantaged families would have a lower morale score than the cross-section sample. Glen and Alston (10) noted that rural people, as compared to urban, are less informed about current events, prefer to be by themselves, and are less trusting of people in general; thus, as indicated by the research, rural disadvantaged families are even more skeptical of the law, have less respect for education, and trust others less due to their feelings of inferiority. The lack of trust of people was clearly visible to the interviewers as they experienced much difficulty in gaining the trust of families in order to acquire certain information. The lack of trust poses a major problem for those who wish to implement an educational program for rural disadvantaged families.

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